FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number	USGS Quad	Area(s)	Form Number
11-70	ORLEANS	G	EAS.119

NR HD 2001

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: *(neighborhood or village)*:
Eastham Center

Address: 195 Locust Road

Historic Name: Atwood – Knowles House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: multiple-family residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1823 (north section)
ca. 1672 (south section), moved ca. 1855

Source: deeds, vital records, censuses, received history

Style/Form: Federal/Cape Cod

Architect/Builder: unknown

Exterior Material:
Foundation: brick

Wall/Trim: wood shingle/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
Small barn w/ store wing attached
Pavilion

Major Alterations *(with dates)*:
House moved from Plymouth and attached, ca. 1855
Wings added to rear, 20th c.
Skylight added to front, late 20th c.

Condition: good

Moved: no ☐ yes ☒ **Date:** ca. 1855

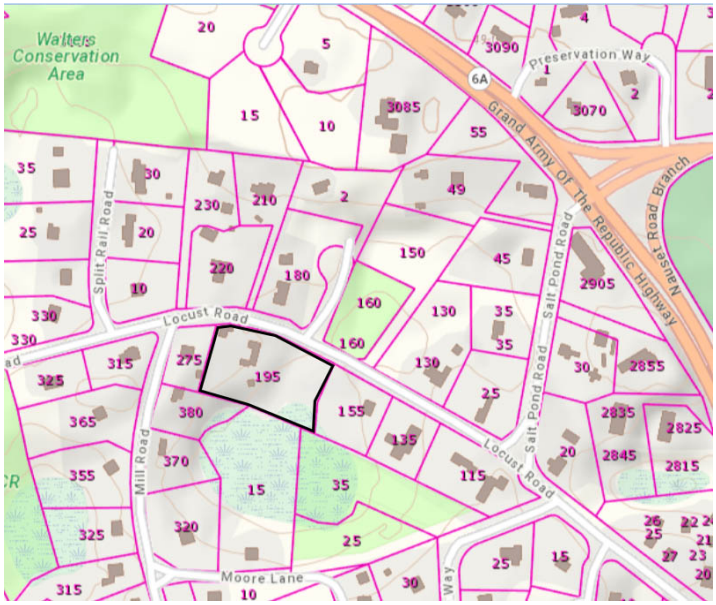
Acreage: 1.37

Setting: The house is situated in a historic community group known as the Old Town Center. The historic properties have been subdivided and now are in the midst of mid-20th-century residential development.

Photograph

View from SW.

Locus Map (north at top)



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Atwood – Knowles House comprises two distinct dwelling forms, one a story-and-a-half Cape Cod-type dwelling with a five-bay center-entrance façade, built ca. 1823, and the other a two-story house with a traditional New England center-chimney plan reputedly built in Plymouth in ca. 1672 and floated to Eastham and joined to the existing house in ca. 1855. An intensive examination of the structure and interior features is needed to document this Knowles family account.

The front façade of the story-and-a-half section is essentially intact except that a window has been removed at the northerly end. There are no particular trim elements save for a narrow frieze along the eave, probably the result of later alterations to the siding wood shingle and windows. This frieze makes a short return around the north gable end where it and the frieze wrapping around from the westerly side are bolstered by narrow corner pilasters and surmounted by simple cornice in the gable. Three windows of odd sizes, two on the first story and one centered in the gable, give the impression of alterations that may have removed a doorway from the westerly side, where the largest window is located, and suggesting that this was the original front façade. A small chimney on the ridge line may occupy the space between two principal rooms on the easterly side of a side-passage or lobby plan. This plan and its proportions were becoming common in the 1820s. A one-story wing at the back corner of the street façade, with an entrance tucked under the hipped roof and facing the street, would have replaced the original entrance if it existed on the gable end.

The two-story addition, moved to the site in ca. 1855, has a five-bay façade with a center-entrance facing southeast. It presumably has an interior plan organized around the center chimney with two principal rooms on either side of an entrance lobby in the front and a kitchen flanked by accessory spaces on the rear. A one-story ell on the rear was added in the 20th century to contain a kitchen and bathroom. A square, hipped-roof vestibule with a doorway and transom reputedly was moved with the house from Plymouth, although it is much deeper than other such projections of the period. There is a thin cornice along a shallow front eave. Like the adjoining house, the exterior finishes and details reflect renovations made after the old house was added in ca. 1855.

The house is situated at the westerly end of a large rectangular lot with a long street frontage; it overlooks a spacious lawn stretching downhill to southeast. A small one-story barn is sited in the extreme northwest corner of the parcel. It perhaps housed John Knowles's paint shop in the 1920s. A small one-story wing on the easterly side was used for a store managed by Lucy Knowles at that time. A larger barn with an asparagus shed occupied the southwest corner of the property. It has been lost but a open frame, gable-roof pavilion near the south end of the house appears to have repurposed framing from the barn or represents the asparagus shed itself.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Deeds for the house numbered 195 Locust Road cannot be traced reliably any earlier than 1869, though part of the house was probably built between 1823 and 1830 for Benjamin Atwood (1803-65) and his wife Charlana Doane (1805-88), who married in 1823. Atwood was from Wellfleet (though his father Benjamin was an Eastham householder in 1790), and Doane was the daughter of Solomon Doane (1778-1816) and Priscilla Mayo Doane (1781-1858) of Eastham. It is possible that the house was built on land Solomon Doane had owned—his widow remarried Abijah Gill and lived at 115 Locust Road—but no deed records a sale of real estate to either Benjamin Atwood or his wife.

The 1830 Eastham census lists Benjamin and Charlana Atwood in a household with a young child, and by 1840 the household had grown to five persons. The Atwoods removed briefly to Chatham, where they were living in 1850 with their daughters Eliza J. and Betsey and rented the Locust Road house—but by 1855 they had returned and were living in the house with four unrelated people. One of them was thirteen-year-old Alonzo Nye Bearse (1842-1911), who lived with the family in 1850. His parents, George and Peninah Bassett Bearse, had died in 1842 and 1847, respectively, and he remained in Atwood's household until Benjamin Atwood died in 1865. Both of the Atwoods' daughters had married by 1855, and after that point the household always included unrelated people: in 1855 75-year-old Priscilla Gill lived at 195 Locust Road, as did Bearse, thirteen-year-old Hope Pierce, and nineteen-year-old British-born seaman "John Fulture," almost certainly John Fulcher, who had been found

shipwrecked off the Cape coast in 1852 and brought to Eastham, married the daughter of farmer Ezekiel Doane, for whom he worked, and later he lived at 155 Governor Prence Road (EAS.770).[1] In 1860 Atwood lived only with his wife and Alonzo Bearse, a lifelong mariner, and was farming; the census estimated the value of his real estate at $1800 though he owned only twelve acres.

Alonzo Bearse served for nine months in the 43rd Massachusetts Infantry during the Civil War and was mustered out as a corporal in July 1863. He immediately returned to Eastham and married Abby T. Brewer, daughter of Edward and Lydia Brewer of Eastham. The 1865 census Bearse, his wife, and their daughter Linnie in one part of the 195 Locust Road house and Atwood and his household in the other: his wife, twelve-year-old Mary Nickerson, and the three young daughters of his married daughter Betsey, whose husband William Knowles had died in 1864. This is the first indication that that a second house was attached to the existing one.[2] In 1865 Benjamin Atwood, daughter Betsey, and granddaughter Martha F. Knowles all died, Betsey in March, Benjamin in August, and Martha in September.

In his will Benjamin Atwood left Alonzo Bearse two hundred dollars " in consideration of benefits received" from him "during his stay with me" and left the rest of the estate to be distributed among his heirs "as the law directs in the settlement of intestate estate." In February and October 1869 Atwood's estate administrator sold his real estate to Bearse, John Myrick, and Barnabas H. Chipman, who had built 220 Locust Road (EAS.120) by that time. Myrick (1799-1822) had married Atwood's widow Charlana in 1868; Bearse bought half of the house and part of the land for thirty-five dollars.[3] In 1870, however, Bearse and his wife and children were living with his in-laws, and the census indicates that John and Charlana Myrick were living in the house with John's older brother William. And they might have been renting part of the house in 1880, when that year's census again lists them in the neighborhood; the Myrick brothers were in their eighties, while Charlana was seventy-three years old.

In 1873 John and Charlana Myrick sold their part of the property to Eastham fisherman Elisha Smith, whom the 1880 census also shows in this neighborhood, alone in his house though not in the same household as the Myricks. Elisha Smith died in 1881, and in March 1882 his father Nathaniel sold his share of 195 Locust Road to Lucy Jane Knowles, wife of John Atkins Knowles (1852-1922); less than a month later Bearse sold his share to John Knowles.[4] John and Lucy J. Knowles and their family own the property into the current day.

John Atkins Knowles was the son of Wellfleet mariner Jonathan Knowles (1821-58) and his wife Caroline Gill Knowles of Eastham. He was working as a painter in 1876 when he married Lucy Jane Cobb, daughter of Joseph M. and Jane Cobb. In 1880 the couple and their daughter Caroline Linwood Knowles were living with Betsey Knowles, the widow of Nathan S. Knowles, and her son Asa. They must have moved shortly after buying the 195 Locust Road house in 1882. They are listed in this neighborhood in 1900 with daughter Carrie, who worked in a dry goods store, and son Abbott Stanford Knowles, a farm worker. In 1910 John and Lucy Knowles lived only with an African American domestic servant; at that time John was a carriage painter, and his wife ran a retail candy store from the house; by 1920 John Knowles was an automobile painter, and Lucy operated a variety store. According to grandson Paul Knowles, her store was in a shed attached to the small barn on the property; a large barn at the rear of the property with an attached asparagus shed is not extant.

John Knowles died in 1922, and his will left his entire estate to his widow Lucy. In 1924 the *Hyannis Patriot* reported that she had rented "the tenement" in her house to John McCoy and two others "through the winter," and she spent at least part of the winter of 1925 with her daughter Carrie, who had married William H. Forrest of Provincetown in 1901 and lived in Eastham; Forrest ran a variety store on King's Highway. Lucy J. Knowles is listed on Locust Road in the 1929 directory and as the sole member of her household in the 1930 census. She died in December 1934 at her daughter's home.[5]

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[1] Fulcher was born in Great Yarmouth, England, and was a twelve-year-old cabin boy on the British brig *Margaret* when it foundered off the Cape; Eastham historian Alice Lowe stated that Eastham's Freeman Doane Mayo found the boy lashed to the vessel's mast on the beach and brought him to Eastham. Alice A. Lowe, *Nauset on Cape Cod: A History of Eastham* (Falmouth, MA: Eastham Historical Society, 1968), 107.

[2] The 1985 MHC B Form provides an account of Paul Knowles, a later owner of the house, learned from his grandfather John Knowles that the back part of the house was built in Plymouth in 1672 and floated across the bay where it was joined to an existing structure built in late 1700s.

[3] E. E. Knowles, administrator estate Benjamin Atwood, to Alonzo S. Bearse, 20 February 1869, BCD 94:71; E. E. Knowles to John Myrick, 9 October 1869, unrecorded but cited in BCD 115:254; E. E. Knowles, administrator estate Benjamin Atwood, to B. H. Chipman, 8 October 1869, BCD 94:72.

[4] John and Charlana Myrick to Elisha Smith, 26 November 1873, BCD 115:254; Nathaniel Smith to Lucy Jane Knowles, wife of John, 21 March 1882, BCD 154:492; Alonzo N. Bearse to John Knowles, 11 April 1882, BCD 154:493.

[5] "Eastham," *Hyannis Patriot*, 12 May 1924, 11; "Eastham: Lucy J. Knowles," ibid., 27 December 1934, 2.

In March 1927 Carrie Knowles Forrest deeded her share of the property to her brother Abbott Stanford Knowles.[6] Abbott Knowles and his wife Flora Mabel Schaffer Knowles had lived across the street at 220 Locust Road (EAS.120), formerly Barnabas and Sarah Chipman's house, since at least 1913; they had married in Boston in 1904. Abbott Knowles worked as a piano tuner all over the Cape and also ran a large asparagus farm in Eastham; he and his wife sold the 220 Locust Road property in 1948 but kept 195 Locust Road in their family.[7] The 1930 census lists Abbott Knowles with $4500 in real property in a household with his wife Flora and children John A., an electrician's helper; Esther F., Wilton C., Paul W., and Eleanor C. Eldest child Abbott Schaffer Knowles (1905-52) and daughter Lucy (1907-2001) had already left their parents' household. In 1940 all of the children were gone, and Abbott and Flora lived by themselves.

Abbott S. Knowles died in May 1949, and his widow remained in the 195 Locust Road house. In 1947 she reserved for herself life tenancy "in that part of the building she now occupies" when she deeded it to her sons Wilton, then living in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and Paul, then living in Houston, Texas. The brothers divided the property and deeded the westerly section with the house to Paul and his wife Cynthia later that year. In 1978 Paul and Cynthia Knowles sold the property to their married niece Lucy Ann Tibbals Ott; she was the daughter of their older sister Esther Frances Knowles and her husband Theodore Tibbals. Lucy Ann Ott is the owner of record in 2020.[8]

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MAPS

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Hales, John G. *Plan of Eastham and Orleans*. 1831.

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[6] Carrie L. Forrest to Abbott Stanford Knowles, 8 March 1937, BCD 523:398.

[7] "Eastham," *Yarmouth Register*, 27 April 1929, 6. This account of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Abbott and Flora M. Knowles notes that Abbott "is well known on the Cape as an expert in piano tuning and has followed the business for the past twenty years. He also owns and operates an extensive asparagus farm on the west side of town";

[8] Flora M. Knowles, Locust Road, to Wilton C. Knowles, Lake Charles LA, and Paul W. Knowles, Houston TX, 10 July 1974, BCD 2070:312; Wilton C. Knowles, Lake Charles LA, and Paul W. Knowles, Houston TX, to Paul W. and Cynthia L. Knowles, 23 September 1974, BCD 2101:98; Paul W. and Cynthia L. Knowles, Houston TX, to Lucy Ann Ott, Westwood NJ, 29 December 1978, BCD 2849:15; Thomas M. and Lucy Anne Ott, Westwood, NJ, to Lucy Anne Ott, 23 November 2004, BCD 19317:1. The 195 Locust Road house is depicted on Lot 1 of "Subdivision of Land in Eastham, Mass. as Surveyed for Paul W. Knowles and Wilton C. Knowles," 1 August 1974, BCP 288:54. Esther F. Knowles married Theodore Tibbals from New York State in 1931. She is listed as a widow in the 1940 census and was possibly living at 220 Locust with her children Marie, Lucy, Esther, and Theodore. She attended St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, had worked for Oliver Austin at his bird sanctuary in South Wellfleet in 1931, and was president of the Eastham Health Council in 1940.

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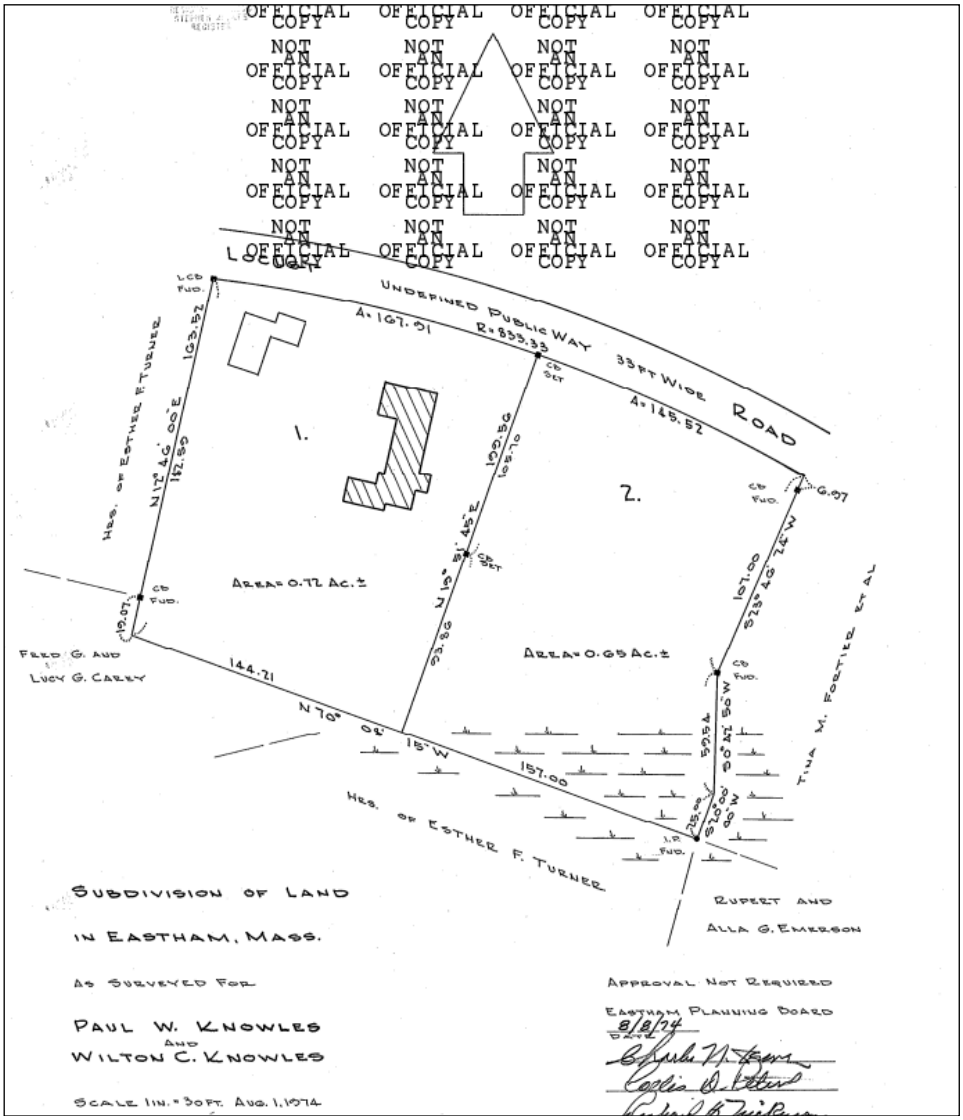
SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



The 1974 Knowles brothers' subdivision shows the house on Lot 1 (BCP 288:54). Lot 2 has since rejoined Lot 1.

PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)

View from NE.

View of barn and store from east.

View of pavilion from east.